

*Chapter 13*The War Years.

By leaving school during the 2nd World War we had to register at 16 years old to know where we were, and what our occupation was. If at the age of 18 years it was considered not a vital occupation to the war effort you would be called up into the armed forces. If you were working on a farm and it was considered helping the food effort of the country and the farm was not over staffed then your part was vital and you had to stay there in that occupation, but register every month to be sure that you were still doing the same job to help the war effort. If you were not your exemption would cease and you would be called to the forces forthwith.

In 1940 we had an army camp which had a powerful search light, sited above Collabear land. There were several nissan huts erected on the site. A huge generator engine was parked along the verge of the road on Ridge Road, some 200 yards from the camp. We were in the flight path of the German bombers on their way from Plymouth to South Wales. When the searchlight lit up the sky you could almost read a newspaper outside in the night, by the powerful light beaming.

I think there were about 25 to 30 men stationed at the camp and in the early days of their arrival if you passed by the camp in the evening you would find the guard at the entrance very often had no rifles. We were told later that for sometime they only had 2 or 3 rifles in the camp. By the time they formed a guard around the camp perimeter and by the generator there were not enough rifles to go around. This was told later to my father by their own commanding officer. So we can see what a plight Britain was in at the start of the war.

Blackout regulations came into force and all windows had to have heavy blackout or dark curtains to shut away any light through the night. If a glimmer of light shone through the curtains in the window you could be liable to prosecution. All lights on vehicles, including bicycles had to have their lights masked over so that they only had a glimmer of light.

Then the home guard was formed to protect the local areas in case of enemy attack, taking in men and youths giving them local training 2 evenings a week and very often rifle practice or manoeuvres at week ends.

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Apparently some odd things happened during their training sessions. I have been told in one case a group of men were receiving instruction in Park Gate Quarry, on how to hold, pull the pin and throw a hand grenade. Specific instruction was given that once the pin on the hand grenade had been pulled, there was only a given number of seconds before it would explode.